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Paul R. LePage
GOVERNOR

11 September 2018

The 128th Legislature of the State of Maine
State House
Augusta, Maine

Dear Honorable Members of the 128th Legislature:

Under the authority vested in me by Article IV, Part Third, Section 2 of the Constitution of the State of Maine, I am hereby vetoing LD 1925, "An Act To Provide Funding for the Conduct of Elections."

As I prepare this veto message, I realize it is likely my last as Governor of this great state. Over the past eight years, I have exercised this constitutional prerogative more than any of my predecessors. I did this not for my own amusement nor to claim bragging rights. Rather, I vetoed your bills because it was my responsibility—my sacred responsibility to the people of Maine—to defend their liberties, to keep our fiscal house in order and to hold the Legislature accountable for both the content of law and the conduct leading to its enactment. Sometimes blocking bad bills is just as important as passing good ones.

This bill, passed at what is hopefully the end of the longest and most dysfunctional legislative session in recent history, is the embodiment of bad governance. It represents shifty financing and insouciant oversight at its worst. Just a few months ago, the Secretary of State assured us that ample funding existed to conduct Maine's 2018 elections, despite the cost of implementing ranked-choice voting. Now, he tells us that an additional \$334,330 is needed for the election in November. The facts do not add up and the process used to pass this bill stinks.

The 2016 fiscal note attached to Question 5 on the ballot estimated well over one million additional dollars would be needed in 2018 to implement the ranked-choice boondoggle. In October 2017, the Secretary of State's Office clamored that over \$1.5 million more would be necessary just to get through the June 2018 primary. As legislators considered whether the voting system could be shelved by declining to appropriate funds, the cost projections quickly dropped. In March 2018, the figure had suddenly fallen to approximately \$700,000. Then, in an April 9 letter to the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, Secretary Dunlap announced he had miraculously cut estimated costs to almost nothing and promised he could cover them with existing funds. As a result, the Secretary averted the need to continue interaction with the hostile Legislature about implementation of the controversial voting system.



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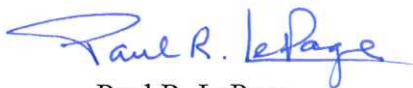
Had this not taken place, an additional funding request made at that time most certainly would have been rejected and jeopardized the future of ranked-choice voting. With the primary behind us and passions over the issue subsiding, on August 30 Secretary Dunlap then advised the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs that an additional \$334,330 would be necessary to conduct November's election because of the cost of ranked-choice voting. Committee members were told that if the money were not appropriated now, taxpayers would be saddled with even heavier financial burdens. Committee members were shocked enough to wring their hands, but they failed to hold anyone accountable. Instead, finding themselves in a bind, they capitulated.

The "public hearing" on this bill that was announced that day—mere minutes before it was to be held and without a printed bill to review—offered no meaningful opportunity for the taxpayers to provide input or to inquire why so much more money was suddenly needed. At 11 p.m. that night, before the news could even report what had transpired, the bill was approved in the House without debate and with virtually no discussion. Nearly one-third of the Representatives were not even present, and most of those in attendance had never seen the bill before. No debate or discussion on the bill took place in the Senate, which passed it less than two minutes after it was introduced without any roll call vote.

This shakedown of Maine taxpayers for more money, after they were told in April that they had paid enough, is politics at its worst. Fighting this kind of devious and unethical dealing is a large part of the reason I became Governor. The way this bill was jammed through without notice and in the dark of night is repugnant to the ideals of transparency and thoughtful decision-making. All Mainers should feel discomfort with this process and the bait-and-switch tactics used to hoodwink legislators into spending even more of the taxpayers hard-earned dollars on the eve of our fall elections.

Therefore, I return LD 1925 unsigned and vetoed to give you a second chance on this matter. I strongly urge you to take it and sustain the veto.

Sincerely,



Paul R. LePage
Governor